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# National Institute of Justice

## S o l i c i t a t i o n

*Jeremy Travis, Director*

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### Drug Court Evaluation II

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:  
March 13, 1998**

**U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs**

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Washington, DC 20531

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## Drug Court Evaluation II

### I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is soliciting proposals for a national evaluation of “implementation grant” drug court sites that were funded in 1995 and 1996 by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Drug Court Program Office (DCPO).

Funding of up to \$500,000 will be made available for this solicitation for one award. This award will be for a first phase of research which is expected to last for a period of up to 24 months. A second, supplemental grant will be made for a second phase of the research, ranging in duration from 12 to 24 months, with an award amount dependent on the scope of work required.

Some of the drug courts targeted by this research solicitation already have onsite local evaluators assessing various aspects of the drug court. The researcher who is funded under this solicitation will be expected to cooperate and coordinate with these onsite evaluators.

The evaluation will be conducted as a cooperative agreement between the grantee and NIJ. Applicants should plan for two trips to meet with NIJ grant managers in Washington, DC.

This document includes information on:

- Background
- Areas of research required
- Site-specific information
- How to apply
- Requirements for award recipients

### II. Background

This solicitation addresses Section 2209 in Part V, Title V, of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 that specifically states that the Attorney General may make arrangements for evaluations of drug court programs that receive grant support from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

The Drug Court Program is administered by the OJP Drug Court Program Office (DCPO). DCPO makes available Federal discretionary grants to States, State courts, local courts, units of local government, and Indian tribal governments for assistance with drug court programs. DCPO has defined a drug court, for the purposes of Federal grants, as a specially designed court calendar or docket the purpose of which is to:

Reduce recidivism and substance abuse among nonviolent adult and juvenile substance-abusing offenders.

Increase the likelihood of their successful rehabilitation through early, continuous, and judicially supervised treatment, mandatory periodic drug testing, the use of graduated sanctions, and other rehabilitation services.

Through its grant program, the OJP DCPO assists drug court programs that, among other things, target nonviolent offenders and involve:

The continuing judicial supervision over nonviolent substance-abusing offenders.

The integrated administration of other sanctions and services in any program that must include:

—Mandatory periodic testing for the use of controlled substances or other addictive substances during any period of supervised release or probation.

—Substance abuse treatment for each participant.

—Diversion, probation, or other supervised release involving the possibility of prosecution, confinement, or incarceration based on noncompliance with program requirements or failure to show satisfactory progress.

—Programmatic, offender management, and aftercare services, such as relapse prevention, health care, education, vocational training, job placement, housing placement, and child care or family support services for each participant who requires such services.

### III. Areas of Research Required

This evaluation of drug court programs will take place in two phases. During Phase I, the research will develop a framework for describing structural components of drug courts programs and will categorize all DCPO drug courts within this framework. During this phase, the research project is also expected to evaluate program implementation and program evaluability and to develop a design for phase II research.

Phase II of the research project will be an evaluation of program impact. This evaluation should be conducted using a control group design and should include estimates of recidivism, participant retention in treatment, and changes in participants' life circumstances and productivity, among other things. Phase II funds will be awarded through a supplemental grant after the satisfactory submission of a design for phase II research. **This design will be due in month ten (10) of phase I.**

### *Phase I Priorities*

Phase I will include a conceptual description of the 16 sites funded by the DCPO in 1995–1996 to implement drug courts. Comparisons should be made between the 16 drug courts. Phase I will also include an evaluation of program implementation and program evaluability, as well as design development for phase II research.

**Conceptual Description of 16 DCPO Drug Court Programs.** Applicants should develop a conceptual description of drug court programs by addressing the following questions:

What are the operational features and logic structures of the 16 drug courts?

How are these drug courts different from and similar to one another?

How do these drug courts differ from other drug courts?

How do these drug courts differ from other specialized courts?

Where do drug court clients come from and what are their characteristics?

What are the key measures of success for drug courts?

How have drug courts evolved over time?

Have drug courts developed management aids, such as process flowcharts and logic models?

**Program Implementation.** During phase I (and throughout the evaluation), strong emphasis should be placed on developing comprehensive descriptive, historical, and attitudinal data about the drug court programs. Data collection should focus on answering the following research questions (among others that may be pertinent to specific sites):

What are the characteristics of the program?

What are the characteristics (prior criminal history, demographics, current offense, drug using profile, etc.) of the population served by the drug courts in question?

How does the program work (treatment, monitoring, sanctions)?

How did the program develop?  
 What issues and conflicts have arisen and how have they been addressed?  
 Why were particular policy and procedural decisions made?  
 What changes were perceived in attitudes and practices as the drug court evolved?  
 How do persons involved in or affected by drug court operations perceive the drug court program's impact and effectiveness?

This information is important for several reasons. Specific operational features of drug courts differ from each other (e.g., target populations; point of drug court intervention in relation to initial arrest; frequency and scope of urine testing during the program; treatment modalities used). Furthermore, within each drug court, operational elements may change over time (e.g., key participant characteristics such as current charge and prior record; types of sanctions and incentives; comprehensiveness of treatment and support services; and key personnel). These differences may conceivably influence program outcomes and must be considered in comparative analyses of various drug court programs. Details of program operations and history provide a context within which to assess the significance of findings for each site with respect to outcome variables. Information on changes in the attitudes and perceptions of those involved in and affected by the drug court program—including judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, treatment providers, court staff, pretrial services staff, probation officers, law enforcement officials, jail officials, public health officials, and the defendants themselves—can be regarded as a type of process and outcome data (to the extent that such changes can be reliably attributed to the drug court initiative). Furthermore, the drug court process creates unique collaborations and relationships that can be valuable both for future planning and implementation efforts.

**Program Evaluability.** During phase I, the research must determine:

What data are currently being collected and in what form?  
 What kinds of comparison groups are available? At each site, what is the potential to conduct research using a control group design? How will a comparison group be constructed? Will courts agree to a random assignment of eligible cases?  
 What kinds of measures of recidivism are available?  
 What are the measures of success for the drug courts in question?

### **Design Development for Phase II Research.**

Once researchers are onsite and working on other aspects of the phase I evaluation, they are expected to develop a viable strategy for evaluating program impact and success. This strategy, in the form of a proposal for a supplemental award, should include a discussion on how to obtain reliable data about the criminal and drug use histories of program participants; data on drug use monitoring, imposition of sanctions, and all other drug court actions; and current and followup data for drug court participants and for relevant comparison group members on recidivism, income, employment, housing, family situation, education, overall health, and other lifestyle variables. Data on these types of outcomes are not readily available in all sites and there are a number of methodological problems that will have to be addressed. This design will be due in month ten (10) of phase I of the evaluation research project.

### **Phase II Priorities**

Phase II of the research will assess the success of the drug courts at meeting their goals. These goals may include cessation of criminal behavior and drug use, retention in treatment, and, ultimately, changes in life circumstances and productivity, among other things (as determined by phase I).

NIJ envisions the use of a variety of measures pertaining to the offender, the criminal justice system, and relevant social services. Both costs and benefits should be considered in the assessment. Note that the first phase of this research should assess the availability of measures that will help answer these important questions.

**Cessation of drug use and criminal behavior.**

During phase II, using a wide range of data sources, the research must assess the impact of the drug court programs on cessation of drug use and criminal activity.

**Participant retention in treatment.** The impact of the program on participant retention in treatment is notable to the extent that duration of treatment has been found to be a strong predictor of abstinence from and cessation of drug use.

The research will be expected to answer the question:

What is the impact of program participation, and the many aspects of participation (duration and type of treatment) upon the participant retention in treatment, and what role does participant retention in treatment have on the criminal recidivism and substance use of these particular program participants?

**Changes in Participants' Life Circumstances and Productivity.** The research should also estimate the effect of the program participation on employment, income, savings, housing, education, overall health, and other life circumstances and lifestyle variables. These estimates should be made by reference to a comparison group.

The research will be expected to answer the question:

To what extent and in what ways are there measurable differences between drug court program participants and members of relevant comparison groups, in terms of changes in the life circumstances and productivity variables?

**Measures of Criminal Justice System and Social Services Operations.** Other measures of interest include savings and costs of welfare, health care, housing, and criminal justice system operations (costs of pretrial services, prosecution, defense, adjudication, probation, corrections, drug treatment, etc.).

Little is known about the availability of data bearing on these questions. Yet, in order to conduct a thorough impact assessment of drug courts, it is necessary to answer the following questions:

What are the ongoing costs of the drug court program to each of the participating organizations (e.g., court, prosecutor's office, public defender's office, police, sheriff/jail, pretrial services, probation, treatment providers)?

What are the savings in costs to each of the participating organizations from their involvement in the drug court?

What other savings or other benefits, both short term and long term, can be attributed to the drug court program? To what extent can such savings or benefits be quantified? (for example, reduced use of jail, prison, probation, and parole; reduced theft and victim injuries; reduced health care costs; reduced reliance on welfare and food stamps; reduced infant and child care costs; increased economic productivity and tax payments; or other types of savings or benefits).

Which drug court program designs appear likely to produce the most significant short-term and long-term costs and savings? Which defendants will be the most successful program participants, and which will be the most suitable "targets" for use of limited treatment and other resources? Which program designs are most problematic?

**Research Design and Comparison Groups.**

Discussions pertaining to phase II should carefully consider the selection and configuration of comparison groups (including eligibility and exclusion criteria); threats to study validity, such as voluntary participation in the program and maturation effects on substance abuse; the determination of program relapse versus program failure; and strengths and limitations in the research design selected.

The identification of appropriate comparison groups, for whose members it will be possible to collect essential data, should be a key element of the evaluation design for drug courts. To the extent possible, members of comparison groups should be similar in terms of salient characteristics, such as:

Nature, severity and extent of current charge(s)  
 Nature and severity of drug use history  
 Nature, severity and extent of prior record  
 Date/period of arrest  
 Age  
 Race/ethnicity  
 Gender

**IV. How to Apply**

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information and forms to qualify for funding:

Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance  
 Assurances  
 Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)  
 Disclosure of Lobbying Activities  
 Budget Detail Worksheet

Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)  
 Names and affiliations of all key persons: applicant, subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax  
 Proposal abstract  
 Table of contents  
 Program narrative or technical proposal  
 Privacy certificate, as appropriate  
 References  
 Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project  
 Resumés  
 Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and publications)

**Due date.** Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on **March 13, 1998**. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

**Award period.** This cooperative agreement is expected to have a duration of 12 to 24 months, followed by a supplemental award of 12 to 24 months.

**Number of awards.** NIJ anticipates supporting two sequential awards under this solicitation.

**Award amount.** Funding of up to \$500,000 will be made available for one award under this NIJ solicitation.

**Guidance and information.** Applicants may wish to discuss their potential research topics with NIJ program staff. Those who wish to do so should contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide additional guidance and information to potential applicants and refer them to an appropriate NIJ professional.

**Obtaining application forms.** To obtain application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients), applicants can:

Access the Justice Information Center on the Web: <http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#NIJ>, or the National Institute of Justice: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>. At these sites, the NIJ application forms and guidelines are available as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer. Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800–851–3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800–421–6770 (in the Washington, D.C., area, at 202–307–1480). Request copies by fax. Call 800–851–3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

**Send completed forms to:**  
Drug Court Evaluation II  
National Institute of Justice  
810 7th Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20531

For more information on the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**

Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

800-851-3420

e-mail: [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org)

You can view or obtain an electronic version of this document from  
the National Institute of Justice website.

To access the site, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.